DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 978 EF 006 281

TITLE	Saving Ohio's Historic Neighborhood Schools: A Primer for School Preservation Advocates.
INSTITUTION	National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-07-24
NOTE	15p.; Also produced by National Trust for Historic Preservation.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.heritageohio.org/advocacy/ Historic Schools Publication.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Activism; *Neighborhood Schools; School Community Relationship; School Construction
IDENTIFIERS	*Historical Preservation; Ohio

ABSTRACT

This publication was developed to assist concerned citizens faced with the loss of their neighborhood schools. It recounts a brief history of school reform in Ohio, leading to the current crisis, and suggests strategies advocates for the preservation of their neighborhood schools can use to save their neighborhood assets. Broad issues addressed include understanding the process of school construction, understanding the perspective of the educator and community, organizing stakeholders, confronting challenges, and designing a communications campaign. (Contains a list of organizational resources.) (EV)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 475 978

HERITAGE OHIO
PRESERVATION REVITALIZATION RESOURCE

NATIONAL TRUST for HISTORIC PRESERVATION

SAVING OHIO'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS:

A Primer for School Preservation Advocates

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R. Nieweg
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
1

PURPOSE:

The intent of this document is to provide concise background information and guidance to historic preservation and community advocates who want to save their older school buildings in the face of a massive statewide school building campaign.

EF 006 281

 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Background

Through the 1970s and 1980s, school facilities in Ohio's many school districts deteriorated under the pressure of tight budgets, which dramatically reduced funds available for facility maintenance. Concurrently a crisis arose in school performance as standardized testing revealed many deficiencies in the education received by the average Ohio student. Both problems were particularly acute in urban areas and small towns where the tax base was inadequate to support a quality education in quality facilities, and social problems compounded the costs of education.

In an effort to assure a more equitable education in wealthy and poor school districts alike, school funding reform advocates went to court in 1991 to force Ohio to reform its public school finance system. In 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the system violated the Ohio Constitution in a decision that has come to be known as "DeRolph I." The State Legislature responded with a series of bills to achieve the "thorough and efficient system of common schools" mandated by the constitution, but to date has failed to fully meet the standard established by the courts in the "DeRolph II" decision, particularly in regard to operational funding.

Nonetheless, 1997 legislation created the Ohio School Facilities Commission and appropriated an initial $300 million for school construction aid to local districts. In 1999, the Governor unveiled a plan to provide $10.2 billion over 12 years to rebuild Ohio's schools. $2.5 billion of that sum has been appropriated to date, largely from tobacco settlements. Projections show that with local school district contributions, the state will spend $23 billion over 12 years rebuilding Ohio schools. The Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding estimates the cost at closer to $30 billion, although no formal study of comprehensive need has been done.

The combination of large sums of money available for school facilities, political pressure to spend it quickly, and OSFC policies favoring new construction over renovation means that historic and older school buildings in most Ohio communities are under threat, and not just one or two at a time. Dozens of historic schools could be lost unless preservation and education advocates work together to preserve these valuable assets. On the other hand, with some policy changes and strong preservation advocacy, the OSFC program could provide an extraordinary opportunity to fund the much needed renovation of hundreds of older and historic schools in Ohio which otherwise will continue to deteriorate.

Understanding the Process

School Standards

Charged with administering a massive rebuilding program, the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) has created a series of publications, programs and administrative procedures using a host of consulting services. Central to the program is the Ohio School Design Manual, which governs all schools funded under the program. That document guides decisions by school districts and their architects in evaluating existing schools, and establishes design standards for new construction and for renovation. The manual was drafted with a clear prejudice toward new construction, but in a series of case-by-case situations pressed by individual school districts and by preservation organizations, OSFC has relaxed its application of the manual and refers to its provisions as "guidelines" rather than rules. OSFC will issue waivers to various provisions upon request of the local school board. Individual project managers of OSFC exercise varied interpretations of the need for strict adherence to these "guidelines" and can imply or deny, even by tone of voice, the likelihood of the agency to grant waivers on various issues.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

Heritage Ohio, and the Midwest Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation have formed a public policy task force to address the structure and bias of these standards, and other OSFC practices that hinder preservation of older schools. But until such time as those guidelines are rewritten, the burden of obtaining a waiver for renovation under the guidelines lies with the local school district applying for funding. It is thus critical that preservation advocates make their case first to the local school board, and inform the school board of the availability of waivers, so requests can be made early in the process. Be aware that OSFC responds to the local school district applicants and favors their preferences. The agency is unresponsive to local advocacy groups and will not get involved in local disputes, even when the issue in question is the interpretation of their guidelines.

Funding Formula

Funding available for school districts from OSFC is based on need and on the relative tax wealth of the district. Thus school districts with very low real estate valuation can receive up to 100% funding of their need from OSFC, while the wealthiest districts' share of support from the state can be zero. The funding formula, updated annually is on the OSFC web site (www.osfc.state.oh.us/Reports/EstFunding.PDF). School districts that are able to access the vast majority of their capital funding from the state see this as a windfall, with little cost to their local constituents, and are thus anxious to take advantage of the opportunity to address their facility needs. Such districts tend to favor new construction, since whatever costs are involved are paid largely by others, making it more difficult to make a case for preservation of older schools. School districts receiving a lesser share tend to be more amenable to renovation options when it can be shown that renovation reduces the cost of the overall building program and thus, the local share.

Timing

OSFC's web site also lists the estimated dates for targeted work in each local school district. School districts facing critical facility issues can petition to move up their target date. And OSFC has created the "Accelerated Urban School Building Assistance Program, which targets the eight major urban school districts in the state in 2002/2003.

School Facility Evaluations

The process begins with an evaluation of all local schools by architect/planning consultants chosen by the district from a list maintained by OSFC. Such evaluations tend to be very superficial and are used to determine the broad outlines of need. Complaints by preservation advocates about the shallowness of these surveys and the gross assumptions of merit that emerge from them, have gone unaddressed to date. New-school oriented evaluators tend to place major emphasis on deficiencies related to:

- Questionable Structural Integrity
- Codes and Life Safety
- Molds and the "Sick Building Syndrome"
- Lead Paint
- Asbestos
- Outdated Technology
- Classroom Size

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

While each of these is often a real concern (see confronting the Challenge, below), they are often overly dramatized by evaluators as irreparable conditions, and then seized upon by demolition promoters as the only reasonable response to an irredeemable situation. It is possible to alter the initial judgment by evaluators with further study, and the final decision on the merit or feasibility of renovation of any particular school building lies with the local school board. However, that first impression of a school board as documented in the initial evaluation tends to stick in the minds of school board members and the public. That can make it more difficult to later make a case for preservation.

Experience demonstrates that communities able to identify schools considered historic before or during the initial survey enhance the prospects for saving those schools, as the board and consultants are influenced by historic status and/or clearly expressed local sentiment. Experience also suggests that anticipating the bias in the assessments against preservation and renovation, and countering it early with case studies of successful renovation of schools in similar condition helps significantly to bring the decision making process back into balance.

Renovation Cost Inflation and Prejudices

The superficiality of the school assessment process leads to estimates of the cost of renovation, which are inflated and severely prejudiced against renovation. The experience of the evaluation team with the process of renovation of schools also significantly influences the results so if possible, school districts should be encouraged to select professionals with that experience. Absent that option, preservation advocates can encourage a second more detailed evaluation of selected schools by design professionals experienced in renovation work, commissioned either by the local school district or hired by the preservation advocates. Recognize, however, that prejudice against renovation, a process inherently more complex and risk prone than building new, is common throughout the construction industry, and particularly within the large firms attracted to a statewide building program of this magnitude.

The 2/3rd Rule

OSFC policy states that when the cost of renovation and/or additions exceeds two thirds of the estimated cost of replacement, the state will not contribute to the cost of renovation. There is no real basis for this rule. It seems to stem from the false assumption that older schools are somehow so "worn out" that continued investment above a certain level is unwise. Such standards exist in several states, but the percentage varies from as low as 50% to as high as 90%, proving the arbitrariness of the standard. In fact, any school that retains its structural integrity in large measure can be renovated by the installation of new systems, finishes, and amenities to produce a useful life commensurate with, and sometimes even exceeding, new construction. The question is: At what cost? Preservation advocates argue for parity; if the cost of renovation exceeds the cost of new construction, replacement should be considered. Until that level of expenditure is reached, renovation is the more frugal course, and thus the wise use of tax resources, whether those dollars come from the local or the state level. This case can be made to OSFC, which may then issue a waiver to the 2/3rd Rule (now officially a "guideline"). But OSFC staff and consultants will not promote this option, and it falls to preservation advocates to inform their local school board and help make the case for the request of a waiver from this rule.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

Acreage Standards

Similarly, OSFC's Design Manual prescribes minimum acreage standards for elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Elementary schools, for instance, are required to have 10 acres, plus one additional acre for each 100 students. This prescription also has no basis in educational need, and seems to have emerged from suburban-oriented standards where broad school playgrounds are often considered community parks. Since older schools were usually built on restricted sites in neighborhood settings, such acreage standards can force their replacement. The remedy is either to relocate the school on available land outside the neighborhood (if it can be found), or demolish housing to clear adjacent property. Just ten acres for an elementary school requires about five city blocks. Again, under pressure, OSFC has agreed to issue waivers, upon request, but the request must come from the local school board. Again, the burden to inform and make the case for a waiver will often fall to local preservation advocates.

The 350 Rule

Despite overwhelming evidence from across the country that smaller school tend to do a better job of educating students, Ohio statutes mandate that construction dollars cannot build or renovate schools with an enrollment or a projected enrollment of less than 350 students. This too can force the closure and abandonment of small neighborhood schools in urban areas, and in small rural communities. In both cases this can devastate the livability and vitality of the immediate community. But state law does allow for exceptions and OSFC is now willing to consider waivers to this rule as well, when a case is made from the local level.

Understanding the Perspective of the Educator and the Community

Needs of the Children

The community will focus on the needs of the children. While preservation advocates are rightly concerned about the loss of historic resources and the preservation of the older schools that serve our historic neighborhoods, it is critical that the needs of the children come first. No one would reasonably argue that children should be exposed to educationally inadequate facilities in order to preserve the historic integrity of our schools. All pronouncements from the preservation community must begin with a statement of support for state-of-the-art schools for our children and support for the district's building improvement program. But since state-of-the-art schools do not have to be brand new schools, preservationists can also argue that our children are best educated in high quality architectural environments which evoke a sense of the past, continuity with earlier generations, and in facilities closely linked to their community when those are available. Agree that a high standard should be set for educational facilities and measure the feasibility of adapting our older schools to that standard. Nothing less will be acceptable.

The Educator's Point of View

It would be naïve to overlook the fact that building all new facilities can be an ego trip for school boards and administrators. But to assume that is the motivation is also simplistic. School boards and administrators face difficult tasks today, with myriad pressures on every decision they make. They function in a world dictated by legislative mandates, and are under intense scrutiny by parents, citizens, employers, and the press. They often spar with their own labor source. They strive to educate children whose attention is too often diverted by social problems at home. Facilities are, in many ways the least of their concerns, as they struggle to improve student

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

performance and outcomes under tight budget constraints. There is a temptation to claim that if existing school facilities were good enough for us when we were in school, they are good enough for the current generation, and blame the school board for letting them go to ruin. Instead, recognize that the expectations of our schools have risen dramatically over the last 30 years, as schools have assumed an ever-widening role in our society. Today they teach values, enforce behaviors, and offer an array of programs unimagined in earlier generations, from Title IX sports gender equity, to English as a second language, to inclusion of those with various physical and mental disabilities. All of these programs and expectations really have made many of our older schools unresponsive to today's educational needs.

Maintain Civility

Understand and acknowledge that school board and professional educators are trying to do the right thing. Articulate a case for preservation in support of their efforts, without denigrating their performance. Maintain a civil and polite demeanor at all meetings and in all conversations. "Hysterical Preservationists" will not win favor.

Anticipate the Process

To avoid crises that lead to emotional confrontations, get active early. OSFC's schedule is available online. Local papers regularly cover school board meetings, so if not before, tune in at the earliest conversations about school facility planning. Then, in the order appropriate to your situation:

- **Organize preservation and neighborhood advocates** to discuss how you will reach out to be a constructive player in school facility planning decisions.*
- **Educate all local preservation leaders** with the materials referenced here from published sources and online.
- **Inventory local schools** to identify those potentially eligible for designation as local landmarks or listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Few communities have surveyed their schools for historic significance, so this will likely require some primary research. Contact the Ohio Historic Preservation Office for criteria and advice (614-298-2000).
- **Document the history** and unique qualities of your best schools and publish your work online or in print, to gain credibility and widen awareness. Include visuals.
- **Create a public forum** to present your research as a slide show of your best historic schools and those supporting historic neighborhoods. Visuals are critical to illustrate quality and diversity.
- **Launch a School History Project** through local PTAs or neighborhood groups to educate children and their families on the history of their school and the role it has played in the life of the neighborhood and community.
- **Rank schools** to identify their relative importance.
- **Approach the school board to offer assitance** to the local school administration to guide their planning. At the same time, request an opportunity to participate in any committees that will study options or guide the facility planning process. Become part of the team.
- **Remain flexible through the process.** Unfortunately, you must expect to lose some schools.

* Contact Heritage Ohio (614.258.6200), the statewide historic preservation organization, for advice on formulating an advocacy campaign and to receive technical assistance.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

Organize Stakeholders

The School Community

Involve everyone you can think of who has a stake in the schools issue. Begin with parents and teachers, either individually, or if possible, through their organizational entities like PTA, unions, etc.

Form Alliances

Reach out to neighbors and neighborhood associations who understand the importance of a neighborhood school but may need to be educated on the value and potential of the existing school building. Remember, many people cannot visualize the potential of a facility they know only as a deteriorated property. Conduct a tour to point out the school's extant charm and recite the school's history to help them see the potential. Bring architects with experience in renovation along to help explain how older buildings can be modernized. Seek out alumni groups, retired teachers, school reform advocates, and smart growth advocates, all of whom should have some affinity for the cause. Similarly, approach city and county elected and planning officials who often understand the importance of the linkage between neighborhood and school better than do school districts. Anti-tax groups can also be partners, since they are concerned about the impact of a massive construction program on local tax levies and often see renovation as an economical alternative to wholesale replacement. With each group, state your concerns, share some outline of your position if possible, and invite them to join you in a constructive dialog. Explore common interests and listen carefully to their concerns. Universal agreement is not necessary, as long as the common ground is well defined.

Be Sensitive to Socio-Economic and Racial Issues

Because schools have been used to enforce social conformity and continue the suppression of minorities, and later as instruments of social engineering in the battle over desegregation, all school issues can be charged with residual resentment and distrust. In many inner city neighborhoods, years of disinvestment in public facilities, and particularly schools, have created bitterness and an air of rightful suspicion. Preservation can be interpreted as the latest tool by which the majority will maintain the status quo. Preservation can also be seen as a prelude to gentrification that drives the economically disadvantaged from their homes. Make an extra effort in such neighborhoods and groups to clarify a commitment to improving school facilities and to school equity. Language can be important. Making a case for "renovation of schools" and not "preservation" may help avoid negative inferences of historic preservation.

Confront the Challenge

Understand the Case for Replacement

Listen carefully to the case for replacement of older schools. Since there is no inherently positive argument, advocates of replacement must almost always state their case in terms of negatives or inadequacies of the existing schools. Use this to advantage by documenting the arguments and then addressing them one by one.

- They will likely begin with a litany of maintenance concerns. Acknowledge that older schools need maintenance but point out that the older buildings have received only band aids in recent years and that a major renovation would renew the systems to last another 50-70 years with no more maintenance than new buildings require.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

- Another common argument is that the facility is too small, either in whole or in part. Point out that renovation often involves sensitive additions and that remodeling often reallocates existing space to meet today's needs. Individual classrooms that are too small can be used for the many small group functions now a part of school programming, or reconfigured at minimal cost by moving non-load-bearing party walls.
- Inadequate technology is often cited as a concern with older schools. Since older schools commonly have high ceilings and/or tunnel systems, routing communication cable throughout the building is not difficult, and costs no more than in new construction.
- A leaky envelope is another commonly cited deficiency warranting replacement. Leaks almost always relate to roofing and windows. Both are chronic when maintenance has been spotty or of poor quality. A substantial renovation will address these matters with new roofs, and often new windows at a quality level at least comparable to new construction. And ask if the maintenance staff has ever had a chronic roof leak on a new building. It is all too common.
- Safety is another major area of deficiency commonly used to discredit historic schools, often in an overly dramatic way to create a scare effect:
  - ✓ Structural integrity is often questioned and stories told of a gymnasium roof collapse in some other community. Getting professional engineers to attest to the soundness of any existing structural element can be difficult in today's litigious world, and even their qualifying statements on perfectly sound buildings can cast aspersion. If the integrity of structural elements is impugned, demand the elements be exposed with selective demolition and fully evaluated.
  - ✓ Code violations are often cited as endangering student safety. Remember that there are different codes for existing buildings and new construction and that the critical element of any code is the life safety section (NFPA 101). Other sections of the building code are prescriptive based on current construction technology so evaluators can often find numerous technical violations. Focus on the real threat to safety and the "spirit" or intent of the code rather than its miniscule details.
  - ✓ Molds are often cited as an indication of a "sick" building. Remember that mold abatement from selected walls in chronically damp areas is not that difficult or expensive. The extensive presence of mold in ventilation systems is serious and likely requires the replacement of much of the system, but know that in new buildings molds are often found in ventilation systems within a few years of construction, so a new school offers no assurance that the district will not face this challenge anyway.
  - ✓ Lead paint poses a threat if consumed or inhaled by children. Options include complete abatement or containment where children are exposed to such hazards. These treatments are not exotic or particularly difficult. They can add some expense, which must be factored into the cost equation, but be aware of the tendency to overly dramatize the risk and the cost.
  - ✓ Asbestos must have already been documented and abated or contained with a regular documented inspection management plan under the American Health and Environmental Rights Act (AHERA) applying to all school facilities. Still, its presence can frighten parents and teachers. Shortly after the passage of AHERA in the 1980s, when all school districts suddenly needed to address asbestos abatement to be in compliance, the small industry that did such work was overwhelmed and costs skyrocketed. Today, the field is competitive and the costs reasonable. It is now a routine aspect of building renovation.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

Agree that compliance with critical life safety issues is important and that only detailed analysis can test the feasibility of remodeling to meet safety concerns. Secure and offer technical assistance from *pro bono* design professionals sympathetic to, and experienced in, preservation to offset the bias often found in school architects and construction managers with a vested interest in new construction.

The other common argument for replacement is that renovating a building in use is disruptive to education. Point out that schools can often be renovated in phases over the summer and that watching the process of renovation can also be an educational experience for students.
There is often an abiding skepticism of the feasibility of renovation and an assumption of the inflexibility of older facilities. This is born of limited truth, but each building is unique, and as preservationists know, older buildings are usually far more flexible than is commonly understood. Use success stories as case studies to illustrate how older schools can meet 21st century educational needs at reasonable cost. Show illustrations of those schools to help people see the potential of their older schools.

But it is still true that some schools can be feasibly renovated and others not. Argue that an objective analysis by an experienced design professional is the only way to test the feasibility of renovation. Show your preparedness to facilitate such a study and accept its results.

Renovation vs. Replacement

A feasibility study of the issues involved in renovation is the only tested way to evaluate the fit of an old building to contemporary educational uses. A feasibility study has three parts:

1. **Programmatic Fit by Schematic Analysis**
   Using the same architectural program developed for a new school, a design professional explores ways in which the existing building can be modified to meet the educational needs of the curriculum. The work product is typically a schematic diagram of spaces and rooms overlaid to the current floor plan of the school, by which the extent of change necessary is self-evident. Additions, which do not fit within existing space, are also shown.
2. **Technical Conditions Assessment**
   An architect and engineering team conducts a system-by-system analysis of the age, nature, and condition of each component of the existing school (and each episode of constriction of that school), to identify systems with sufficient remaining useful life to warrant retention and continued use. The team then recommends which system will require replacement in whole or in part and which type of system is most appropriate to projected use.
3. **Synthesis and Comparative Cost Estimates**
   Based on the above two analyses, the design team then prepares an estimate of the cost of renovation and compares that to the cost of new construction from pre-established or published sources. Care must be taken in this cost summary to include even the hidden costs of both options.

It is critical that this study be executed with great objectivity and fairness. Given the prejudices within the construction industry for new construction, experience in renovating schools within the design team is highly desirable. Also as indicated above, a fair evaluation requires a level playing field in which the less expensive option is the preferred option and no arbitrary cost standards are imposed. This

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

means that the preservation community must accept the results if fairly executed, with one potential exception. That exception relates to the value inherent in some older schools that are just not available in new construction:

- Large and handsome windows, a common feature of older schools rarely available today
- Decorative Woodwork
- Tile, often custom art tiles manufactured in Ohio
- Terrazzo or Wood Floors, available but rarely affordable in new schools
- High Ceilings and Grand Spaces
- Artwork in the form of murals or other special features

By focusing not just on cost but on value, some extraordinary schools may warrant expenditures for renovation that exceed the cost of new construction, though OSFC funding may exempt the cost of restoring that work, if it is necessary.

Also note that renovation commonly generates more jobs in the immediate community, because it is more labor intensive, so there is an economic benefit to preservation. Make the case that renovation is recycling. This conveys an ethic to students and the community that we care about the natural environment enough to avoid the waste of good resources

And be aware that Ohio school funding requires that ½ of 1% of the project cost be set aside to cover ongoing maintenance of any project—new or renovated. There is a common perception that new construction is maintenance free. While maintenance costs may diminish for a year or two after a major construction project (new or renovated), deferral of maintenance is how all buildings deteriorate. The more chronic the deferral, the more geometric the rate of deterioration will be. Most new school buildings actually require more maintenance over time, since they lack the quality construction of an earlier era (plaster rather than wallboard, mortar rather than caulk, terrazzo rather than carpet).

Sprawl Schools

If the location of a replacement school involves a greenfield site, it can also be argued that the related costs of sprawl should be considered in the cost equation, even if those costs are borne by other governmental budgets:

- Land acquisition
- Roadway and utility extensions
- Busing costs
- Fire and police service extensions
- Reduced Property values caused by the loss of a neighborhood school

Issues related to the effects of school policies on historic neighborhood schools and the way in which school location can facilitate sprawl are detailed in the National Trust's publication, "*Why Johnny Can't Walk to School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl*" available online at www.nthp.org/issues/schoolsSum.pdf.

Subjective Values

Other values are even more subjective, but can be discussed as issues without placing a dollar value upon them. These include the sentimental arguments relating to the value of trodding steps worn by earlier generations, and the value of a sense of

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

tradition, and continuity within the community. But do not dwell on them too long. Ask alumni groups, retired teachers, and others so inclined to make this case publicly, and create opportunities for them to do so. Summarize by pointing out that new has its value of being fresh and bright, but renovation can be both new and old.

Small is Beautiful

There is an intuitive understanding, substantiated by a growing body of research literature, that small schools are more effective (see www.edfacilities.org/rl/size.cfm#journals). Since older schools tend to be small, point out that research now indicates that test performance is consistently higher in small schools. Small schools not only improve academic performance, but they improve management of behaviors, social maturity, and participation in extracurricular activities. Don't forget that pedestrian friendly neighborhood schools increase the activity level of students and help address growing concerns about juvenile obesity. And since small schools are most commonly neighborhood schools, their presence also supports property values and continued investment in established neighborhoods, reinforcing the tax base available to the schools for ongoing operational levies.

Success Stories

To help people envision the potential of their old schools if thoroughly renovated, research the state to find success stories. Present copies rich in pictures and data demonstrating the way in which older school facilities meet contemporary standards. The closer these examples are the better. National examples are being collected by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and are available on line (www.nthp.org/issues/schools/studies_intro.html). If examples are available within travel distance, arrange a bus tour of interested parties and photograph and video for display and presentation back home. Have ready for discussion comparable success stories for each deficiency and issue raised by replacement advocates.

A Communications Campaign

Develop a Communications Committee and a Campaign Plan

Create a communications committee to develop and hone your message. Recruit experienced communications professionals or community activists familiar with the techniques of public advocacy, and maintain them as a standing resource to respond to shifting issues and unexpected turns.

Develop a Case Statement

As soon as possible, develop a clear case statement of goals and arguments to support those goals. Supplement it with supporting documents as the issue develops but maintain consistency in the basic case. Use visuals—including before and after pictures—to help people see that older schools can be successfully modernized to meet state of the art standards. Develop short, easy to read—and easy to copy—flyers and distribute them liberally.

Acknowledge the Positive/Challenge the Negative

Use the communications committee and other opportunities to highlight any positive turn of events. Begin by offering kudos to the school district for any constructive action, such as a recent renovation project, honest open dialogs, participatory decision making, etc., when it is sincere. Politely but firmly challenge insincere activities by the schools.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

Maintain a Web Site

To make the case for renovation, and to keep your supporters informed throughout the process, maintain a simple web site. Invite others to join the cause.

Get the Word Out

Ideally, participation in the planning process as outlined above will yield a school board proposal, which integrates preservation into the school facilities plan. Either way—whether in support of the plan, or in opposition to provisions that ignored preservation—as the issue comes to a head on a ballot for the local funding share, be prepared to get the word out by all the means common in American politics:

- Op Ed Case Statement
- Letters to the Editor
- Mailing Lists of Stakeholders/Partners
- Door to Door Visits
- Yard Signs
- Talk Radio and Radio Advertising
- Host or Organize Participation in Town Meetings

Funding

Seek financial support from supporters throughout the process. Rarely is such an advocacy program fundable from outside the constituency. Make it clear to all who share concerns for older schools that it will take a financial commitment as well as a personal commitment to make a difference. Use such funds to defray out of pocket expenses of the advocacy effort. Some funding may be available from philanthropic sources to publish surveys and to help explore alternative feasibility studies if the school district is not approaching that process evenhandedly. But the schools are part of the heritage of each community alone, and the responsibility for their preservation lies in the concerned citizenry of that community.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

Reference Sources

Further information and assistance to preserve historic schools is available from the following organizations:

Heritage Ohio
846 ½ East Main Street
Columbus, OH 43205
614-258-6200
614-258-6400 fax
info@heritageohio.org
www.heritageohio.org
Heritage Ohio is the statewide nonprofit historic preservation organization

Ohio Historic Preservation Office
567 East Hudson Street
Columbus, OH 43211-1030
614-298-2000
614-297-2496 fax
ohpo@ohiohistory.org
www.ohiohistory.org/resource/histpres/index.html
OHPO is the state agency with regulatory responsibility to preserve historic sites under state and federal law.

Midwest Regional Office
National Trust for Historic Preservation
53 West Jackson Blvd. Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
312-939-5547
312-939-5651 Fax
mwro@nthp.org
www.nthp.org
The National Trust is the nation's advocate for historic preservation policies and programs.

Council of Educational Facility Planners, International
9180 East Desert Cove, Suite 104
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
480-391-0840
www.cefpi.com
CEFPI establishes and distributes standards relative to educational facilities.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

Ohio School Facilities Commission
10 West Broad Street, Suite 1400
Columbus, OH 43215
614-466-6290
www.osfc.state.oh.us
OSFC is responsible for administration of the school facilities rebuilding program.

KnowledgeWorks Foundation
700 Walnut Street, Suite 600
Cincinnati, OH 45202
877-852-3863
www.kwfdn.org
KnowledgeWorks funds education initiatives in Ohio with the intention of improving the education process for children.

© 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heritage Ohio

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").